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ABSTRACT

This student sourcebook, developed by an ethnic identity project, contains quotations of 51 individuals from varying ethnic backgrounds and with varying degrees of ethnicity. Appropriate for secondary and higher education, the primary objective is to illustrate that people who identify with ethnic groups are individuals and not merely members of the group. The book is divided into three sections: immigration and assimilation, individual ethnic identity, and ethnic group relations. It is arranged in question-answer form, a result of interviews conducted by project members. Questions examine why people originally came to the United States, whether they still come for the same reasons, what it is like to leave the nation of one's birth, how people identify with an ethnic group, how people express their ethnic heritage, and the sources of prejudice. Statistics about periods of immigration to the United States and immigrants by country of birth (1821-1977) and a list of laws and programs affecting immigration to the United States are included. (KC)

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The Individual and Ethnic Identity

A Sourcebook for Students

A Project of
The Junior College of Albany
Russell Sage College

SO 013 157

July, 1980
Revised
The Junior College of Albany
Albany, New York

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The Individual and Ethnic Identity

An Ethnic Heritage Studies Project

The Junior College of Albany

Albany, New York

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Preface

During the past year, more than fifty people were interviewed about their ethnic identities. They were asked about the history of their families and about the meaning of that heritage for each of them personally. They were asked about the things they do, think, and feel in relation to that heritage. And they were asked how they think that heritage influences their relationships with other people.

The people interviewed are not all alike. Some are older and some are younger. Some recently arrived in the United States and some cannot remember when their ancestors first arrived here, nor even where they came from. Some feel strongly about their ethnic heritage and some have no feeling for it at all.

What you will be reading in the following pages are quotations from the people who were interviewed. The quotations are taken from the things they said during the interviews and arranged to help you, the reader, to understand the processes by which America received its people and the processes by which America's people are learning to live with each other.

Many people need to be thanked for their contributions to what you are going to read. Members of the Advisory Council provided support and guidance to the project as it developed and progressed. JoAnn Larson, as curriculum consultant, gave the material the critical examination of the expert. Marlene Mendelson contributed to the organization and writing of the sourcebook material. She also typed and retyped it so that it would be ready for you to read. And thanks must go to the teachers who, with their classes, participated in the testing of the Sourcebook - Errol Fitzgerald, Arthur Foster, Mary Beth Gosch, and Donald McGrath. But most of all, thanks must go to each of the people who agreed to be interviewed and to allow you to read those words that express their feelings and thoughts about themselves. Through them, maybe we can learn about ourselves.

Henry H. Brownstein
Albany, N.Y.
July, 1980

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Introduction

All of us - whether we be white, black, red, or yellow; born or naturalized in the United States; whether we prefer to eat apple pie or lasagna - we are all Americans. But that does not mean that we all have to be alike. We are each unique as individuals, with different stories to tell about ourselves. And for each of us, part of that story tells of a journey, a journey that brought us ultimately to America. We may speak of that journey with pride, as when we wear badges to proclaim our ties to the place where that journey began. Or we may conceal it in shame, as when we try to hide the fact that it ever occurred. Or we may not even have known, perhaps until just now, that there ever was such a journey in our own personal story. But however we treat it, it is part of our own story. And that story is for each of us the story of our ethnic identity.

In the following pages, other people, people you don't know, will be telling you their own stories in their own words. They will tell you of the journeys of their ancestors, or of their own journeys. They will tell you how they feel about that journey and how it has affected their lives. And they will tell you what happens when people from so many different backgrounds come to live together in this place we call America. Maybe, in their stories, you will find a part of your own.

1

IMMIGRATION

ASSIMILATION

I. IMMIGRATION AND ASSIMILATION

A. COMING TO AMERICA

Throughout the course of American history, more than 45 million people have left their homelands to come to America.

> *Why would someone from another country come to the United States?*
>
> *Why did each of the following people, or their ancestors, come to America?*
>
> *Did each of them come of their own free will?*

female, 65, Italian ancestry

Q: Do you know why your parents came to this country originally?

A: No, not really. I suppose at that time, everybody wanted to come to America, and that's about the only thing that I could say. My dad was very adventurous... one of these type men that like adventure, and I think that's the only reason he came over.

male, 32, Irish ancestry

A: Can you tell me anything about the history of your family, where they came from and how they got here?

A: On my mother's side, it would go back to the potato famine. They were immigrants; they were forced off the land, of course, which they did not own. They came here, and settled in South Troy, and they worked in the burgeoning industry of the Burden Iron Works.

female, 65, Jewish

Q: Did your parents ever tell you any stories about what it was that made them get up and leave?

A: Persecution, of course, and of course, in America, the streets were paved with gold, you know. And my father never found the gold. He was a carpenter. He worked hard. He sent for my mother and it was never an easy life. We lived on the East Side in New York.

male, 42, Polish ancestry

Q: Do you know what brought your family from Poland?

A: I guess just like everyone else, the Promised Land. It was much better here. Everyone thought America was the land of the rich, and that things were a lot better here than over in Europe.

female, 62, Irish ancestry

Q: Do you remember ever hearing any stories about when your ancestors came over or why they came, or the kinds of experiences they had?

A: I did hear that one great-grandfather came over at the time of the Civil War, when they offered the Irishmen money to fight in the Civil War. That was why one came over. That was the only thing I ever heard.

female, 44, born in Japan, who came in the '50's

Q: Were you born in Japan?

A: Yes.

Q: Have you become an American citizen?

A: Yes. I came here in 1957. Then I had three years of waiting until I became a citizen.

Q: Did you come here planning to stay or was it for a vacation or a visit?

A: Oh, I married an American citizen. The other people in my family are still in Japan.

black male, 19

... In 1755 there was a man and a woman who were brought here from Ghana, and they were brought to Richmond, Virginia. That is where the plantation of Augustus M. was. And he was into tobacco, cotton, and corn. And from there, the generations and generations just went and went. Also these people were separated. But nobody moved by choice.

Q: What made them come in the first place?

A: ... In Africa, at that particular time, the Africans were not aware of the fact that the white man wanted to capture them for any type of purpose like slavery or whatever, and a lot of them said, these people are my friends. And anybody that would come on the land was a friend. But if you let a devil in your household he just gonna burn your house. And that's the way it was.

female, 56, Jewish

Q: Can you tell me something about the history of your family?

A: My father came from Bessarabia, and came over before World War I. That's part of Romania now. It's Russia. He was a socialist, and he was going to be taken into the Czar's army, and he didn't want to go. Besides, the conditions for Jews there weren't good. He left and came over when he was about 17. He came over without any money.

As people continue to come to America, do they still come for the same reasons?

female, 14, Russian-born

Q: What brought you here?

A: I came from Russia, Leningrad, and I didn't have any specific reason. I left because my parents did, and they had reasons. They did not like the country that they lived in, and they thought that America would be better. So then I really didn't have my own opinion because it was 2 years ago and I was 12 years old...

female, 19, from Iran

Q: Why did you come to the United States?

A: I told you, my best friend is my sister, and I wanted to be with her, and she was here. You know, we talk and discuss a lot of things.

Q: Is she older than you?

A: Yes. Now she's 26, and she is experienced. Not that she is a model for me or anything, because there were times for us that she was learning from me. But I came here to study. I believe that education here is good. I don't like the society, but I educate myself. Education in my country is not that good, at all. I wasn't satisfied with the system.

black male, 18, from Rhodesia

... It's a very big thing if you've been to America and you go back home, and we think of America as the ultimate. Most people's goal in life is to come to America to go to school. A lot of people are just dying to come to America... It's something of a status symbol.

Q: Will your status be increased when you go back?

A: Yes. It would be...

Q: Have you been to a McDonald's at all?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you enjoy that?

A: As a matter of fact, that's the very first thing that I wanted to eat when I came here. Because my father was telling me about it. He was saying that there was a certain food - what they call a Big Mac, you know, it has everything on it. He said it's a meal in itself. And some of my friends had been to America and they were telling me about Big Mac and everything, and I was so eager to try it out. One of the reasons I wanted to come here, too... When I got into Albany, the first opportunity I could find, I went to a McDonald's and I can remember the time, the place, where I sat, and everything...

male, 50, German-born

...In Germany there was post-war times. Everybody was sort of poor, you know.

Q: Did you come to this country knowing what it might be like?

A: No. Absolutely not. We just went without any knowledge of what to expect. Of course, we knew that there was an enormous amount of money, work, business, you know, so I did not have any hesitation or fear of what I would run into. First of all, I came here as a full-fledged master in my trade. So I had no fear of competition or anything. I knew I would be able to compete with anybody and be able to do my work.

How did people get to America?
What are some of the problems they faced?

male, 82, Jewish

Q: What was the trip like when you came to America?

A: Those ships weren't so luxurious as the liners going now... It was liners that carried baggage, that carried merchandise, and anything else, and there were especially big liners that had room for a lot of passengers together.

Q: Did you have your own room?

A: No, not to myself. We were a group of ... 4 in a room. The sleeping quarters were just like, one on top, a shelf, one on top of another, like double beds, one on top of the other...

... When we came in at Ellis Island, I remember we came in at night and at night we slept on the ship. And the next day, when they took us off from the ship and brought us to Ellis Island on a small boat, I went through customs, and I was waiting for a brother of mine to come and get me... I had $25 with me, and that was necessary to show that I had something with me to support me.

male, 64, Italian-born

... I came to America with my father in 1930.

Q: Did your whole family eventually come?

A: No. See, in Italy, in those days, especially, they never did. The wife never did come to America with their husbands, but other nationalities, they use to come, the whole family.

... In the 20's up to 1965, there was the quota system. The quota system was discriminating against some nations... So we tried to get everyone and we did. So from 1961 to 1965 we worked very hard and passed a law and now all the nations of the world are equal in immigration...

male, 69, Jewish

...I was born while my father was in New York, and when I was 2 years old, he sent money over for passage, and we left. Now one of the interesting things was that my older brother was born with a misshaped foot, and they had taken him to Kiev, and had operated on him. But when my mother went to buy the steamship tickets, the agent said, "You know the immigration law is very, very strong in New York, and I would advise you to enter America through another port," and he went down the list, and he said Boston. They are not so strict there. First of all, there are not so many people coming in, and they let you go through easier. He said, "I'm afraid they might question the foot."

Q: There was a choice of which port you would go to?

A: Of course. You paid your steamship fee according to whatever port you were going to. So we actually landed like the Pilgrims - at Boston.

male, 61, Greek ancestry

Q: Could you tell me something about the history of your family, where they came from, where they settled?

A: Well, they came from the mountains of Greece. The nearest city was 60 miles away. A good-sized city. And my father came here in 1906, and arrived at New York, where other Greek people lived, preceded him, assisted him in finding a job.

Q: Did he have relatives who greeted him here?

A: No. In large cities in those days, there were certain enclaves of people of certain national groups, and you have Little Italy in New York, down on Mulberry St. The Greek section at that time was on Madison St. That was Greek town. And he went into the candy business...

female, 79, Jewish

Q: When you came over, did you come on a ship to this country?

A: Sure. I was very sick, I remember that too... And I was scared. I wasn't 16 yet...

Q: Did you go to Ellis Island?

A: Oh, yeah, and I waited there... I took sick on the ship, and they thought I had some sickness, and they held me back. They were going to send me back. The doctor gave me some medicine, and a woman came back with me, and she spoke for me and I explained that I was not sick, just that the ship... So then they let me in, and my cousin had to come and claim me. I was there 2 weeks, and they held me back.

female, 75, Jewish

... I didn't come here (from Russia) until 1910. My mother came here with 4 children, from 6 months to 7 years. I wasn't quite 6 when I came. And then, of course, we lived in New York a short period, and then we moved to Albany. I remember the trip and everything.

Q: Could you tell me a little about that? What was it like?

A: The ship - well, we came like rats in the cellar, you see - in steerage. And most all the children were sick, but me, nothing bothered... I know they allowed one egg for a child. The parents were not allowed to get an egg, only the children.

Q: Who provided the egg?

A: The ship... so momma had 4 children. She'd always hide one egg and say, "you only gave me three." Therefore, she could get an egg, too. And we came to America. The first thing they gave us, I remember, was a ham sandwich... I'll never forget it.

If you came to America today, would getting in be any different?

male, 50, German-born, who came in 1956

I remember that we had almost identical weather that we have today. We arrived in New York City with the Queen Elizabeth. We had a rough time coming over, but the trip was smooth and no complications.

Q: How did you know to come to Albany?

A: We had a sponsor here, and therefore, we came here to live... But lifestyle and circumstances and work will then not always permit you to travel into a different area. We have many times wished we would be 200 miles more south, so as to escape the winter, because we're not, especially my wife, she's not used to the extreme cold.

female, 38, Italian-born, who came in 1967

Q: What was it that brought you to this country in the first place? Was it your brothers and sisters?

A: Well, my sister was here, and she had the kids on vacation in Italy for about a year. We kept them there, and after a little while, I brought the kids back, and she wanted me to stay, so I stayed. That's how I'm in this country.

Q: So it wasn't that you planned to come here to stay eventually?

A: No, I didn't plan, because I had a good job over there.

Q: So you just came here visiting and you wound up staying?

A: For a visit, and then my mother came over, and then I like it. I stayed here.

What is it like to leave your own nation of birth?

black male, age 18, Rhodesian-born

Q: Do you ever miss your country while you're here?

A: I miss it a great deal. Probably because I feel that I want to share certain things, but I can't say those things here because they don't really mean a thing, because there are certain places that I would like to talk about and I don't talk about. Then with the food, the way of life, things like that. I miss that.

female, 14, Russian-born

Q: How did it feel being 12 years old and leaving your country?

A: Well, it felt real bad, because I had a lot of friends and I was involved in a lot of activities in school - sports, a lot of friends, I was going to camp and I had a lot of friends there from my class, from my street, so I really didn't want to leave.

Q: Was it very much like here, where you were living in Russia?

A: There are a lot of differences... The whole way of life is different. In America, you can't live without a car, and that I found very hard to get used to - to think of driving everywhere. When I was in Russia, I was independent in means of transportation. If I wanted to go somewhere, I just took a bus... We lived in a big city, and the transportation was pretty good, not like in America - everybody has cars.

I. IMMIGRATION AND ASSIMILATION

B. BECOMING AN AMERICAN

What is it like to come to America from another country?
Did any of the following people have a problem trying to adjust to America?
How was their adjustment made easier?

male, 50, who came from Germany in the 1950's

I had a job waiting for me. We lived in Albany, and the job was in Schenectady, so I traveled back and forth every day, and learned English on the bus.

Q: On the bus?

A: Yes. It was very funny, because a friend of mine said that the fastest way to learn English is to read the newspaper every morning, loud. So I walked to the Capitol, which was near our apartment, and picked up a newspaper, and I went on the bus. And I read the newspaper loud, and I paid no attention to anybody else. But later they told me it was a riot, you know. They all listened to me. You are reading half English, half German, but within a few months, I had no problem with reading. Speaking, of course, you speak with a heavy accent. But I had no problems at all, to do this.

Q: That must have been interesting - those early days.

A: Yes, of course, the early days, you know, are the most impressive on you. What you recognized in terms of different ways of just eating. Breakfast in the morning, juice and all - that's something absolutely American. Because in Germany, you don't drink juice in the morning. Here you take it for granted that you eat bacon and eggs, which is absolutely not common. And then another thing that almost killed me was the heat in houses.

female, 19, Iranian student

Q: Could you tell me about when you first came to this country?

A: Yeah. I was 16 when I first came here... and at that age, you are changing. It is adolescence, you know. And it's harder to go to another country, another culture, everything is different. You don't know what you're doing, you're just going up and down. When I came here, my brother and sister were here. They knew English. They were here for a year. And you know, they were telling me about this country. And my sister was my friend, who helped me a lot with this culture and how I could get along with this people better. And the first 6 months I used to cry. I didn't know how to cope. I didn't know how to adjust. I didn't know anything. But after 6 months, I realized that it's about time

for me to put up with them. If I'm going to stay here and I'm going to study. I used to get so sad...

female, 79, Jewish

... I was young, and I didn't make a living, and I struggled. And I remember I worked in a factory in Long Island - a shoe factory, and they used to make the men's leggings. They wore them on the top of the shoes, if you remember. I worked there. I couldn't make a living. I lived with a cousin, paid a dollar and a half a week - 60¢ for suppers... My husband saw that, the way I didn't have lunch, so he got after me, you know, and I wanted protection, and I married him. He was a very nice man. I had a good life.

female, 19, Italian ancestry

... People who come to the United States straight from Italy sometimes have a hard time adjusting here because people tease them. I've seen little kids who can't even talk English, you know, who come over. Instead of people helping them out, they make fun of them. They take them for their money; they do.

Q: Little kids?

A: Yeah. I've seen it done. Like at the "Y". I was a lifeguard there, and like it'd be hard to help a little boy out who couldn't understand, or a little girl. And instead of the other kids helping, they would laugh.

male, 61, Greek ancestry, whose family came in the early 1900's

... I didn't speak English until I went to the first grade. I learned only Greek. The reason for that is that in those days my father wh. had a candy store, brought relatives over to assist him in the business - cousins, brothers. When established, they went in their own business. .... And there was always somebody coming over from the other side, to fill the shoes of the people that were there before... It's very natural in my generation. All the offspring of the immigrants spoke their native language. Because the parents didn't know English.. It seems to be changing today, though, because the immigrants that are coming over now from Greece learn English much faster because their life isn't as confined.

female, 64, who came from Argentina as a child

Q: Do you remember when you came to the United States and started going to school here, was it ever a problem that you spoke Spanish?

A: It was a problem. But fortunately, when I was in Argentina, I had gone to school in the first grade. And when we came here, when I was enrolled in school, I didn't know what it was all about, until I had a teacher in the second grade who spoke Spanish. And she spoke to me and explained things to me. And we were way ahead over there than we were here... I went through public school in 3½ years, once I understood...

female, 38, who came from Italy in 1967

Q: When you first came to this country, did you have much trouble adjusting?

A: Yes. One good thing I have to say about American people. They are wonderful. They help. I didn't have any problem at all. They try explaining things, try to help you, no problem at all... I never went to school because I never had a chance at it, and I was working in a toy factory. But it was too much for me... So I said, I have to try to do something. So I decided to go to beauty school. And they told me that I could take the State Board exam in Italian. I was glad, really. I went to school, and the girls, they were wonderful. And I did not know English at all. I didn't want to be in the factory all the time, so I said, I'd rather do this. And then I learned English. I read the paper every day, watched TV, and learned enough of the English.

Q: Were the other students helpful to you, when you went to school?

A: Beautiful. Like sisters, they were to me, the girls. And if I didn't understand one thing, they explained it to me very nice. And that's the greatest thing from this country. People don't laugh at you.

black female, 18, whose mother came from Central America

When I was growing up, I was living in the projects in Harlem. It was a fine time because everybody got along. But most of the black Americans who lived in the project and the Hispanics, they stayed on opposite sides. They didn't really speak... They used to come to my mother, who is the director of a referral service in Harlem. And she's the only one out of the whole office that can identify with the Hispanics. She loves the work, too, and all the Hispanics come to her. They can't identify with the other black people who are there, because they don't understand their problem.

female, 72, Jewish

Q: How did your husband get established when he came to America?

A: In those days, the boys and girls that came from Europe, mostly boys, down on the East Side in Canal Street, they knew each other. Some were working already, and they said, "Do you want to come to my factory?", or something like that. After awhile, my husband wanted to learn how to talk English well. He went to a Jewish young man who had a school where he taught the "greenies" English. He became very good friends with that teacher. He learned English and started a new business.

Can coming to America change a person?

male, 50, who came to America in the 1950's from Germany

We (my family) are no longer typical German. We have inherited another culture. We in the 23 years, we have absorbed the good of that culture here in the United States, and since we grew up in another culture, we are able to sort them out, like sorting out potatoes. We are able to say this is good and this is bad. It might harm you later, so don't be so eager to adopt it. Mix it. That will give you, then, a little line in the middle where you can say, well, I have this, and I have some of this, I am able to judge better. And I really think that we have been very fortunate in this way, that we are people of two cultures, to be able to judge from two sides.

black male, 18, from Africa

Q: Do you think that America has changed you at all?

A: Yeah. I feel that America has changed me because I've learned a lot about human relations. There are a lot of things that I didn't know about, really, before I came here. I think I've changed in my outlook on people. I went to school in England, and the British people either like you or they don't. If they don't like you, they'll tell you. They can be very cold. And I feel, having come from Africa, coming to Britain, and coming to America, I thought that all whites were the same... I think about it differently now. I don't think in color terms any more.

female, 14, Russian-born

Q: Do you eat different foods since you've come to America?

A: It's the kind of food that they have here and they don't have in Russia, or they have in Russia that they don't have here. Like McDonald's. In Russia, they don't have anything like that. Or, just the kind of food. You know, all the junk food, cereals, I mean in Russia, they don't have cereals. I was amazed when I came here. You take a box and you take something out of it, and you put milk in it, and you eat it. It's so fast. In Russia breakfast is usually an egg or something - scrambled eggs. That's the kind of thing that's the same.

Q: That's interesting. Has the way you dress changed at all?

A: Oh, yes. Styles of clothing are better. I don't know why, but I just found it more comfortable.

male, 20, Greek ancestry

... My father came over with no education and he's putting me through college. I'm saying even if I don't do that good, I know I'm doing a lot better than the people who brought me here... I can actually see it changing from the relative who just came over to the relatives who are here for awhile. You can see they're different.

female, 71, Jewish, whose family came from Europe

... I don't know what they expected when they came here, because most of the men were just students in Europe, and the women would raise chickens and cows and gardens to provide for the family. But how they expected to have things so much better here, I don't know, because they had it very, very rough. The men had to work in ways they never worked before, when they came here, to provide for the family, and it was hard.

2

YOUR OWN ETHNIC HERITAGE

II. YOUR OWN ETHNIC HERITAGE

A. KNOWING YOUR ETHNIC IDENTITY

In the last section, we saw how everyone can trace themselves back to an ancestry from some other land. But does everyone identify with that heritage?

> *Why does each of the following people identify with their ethnic heritage?*

male, 42, Polish ancestry

Q: Do you identify yourself with any ethnic group?

A: Yeah, Polish... When I was a child, I went to a Polish school, where I would have to learn Polish history, and when we learned Polish history, it was in the Polish language. And we had to read American history books which were in English, and when we went into the math course, we'd do everything in Polish. We learned how to add, subtract, and multiply in Polish, and we learned how to do the same in English. We had to learn both ways. Reading, writing, and spelling.

female, 27, Irish ancestry

Q: Do you identify yourself with any particular ethnic group?

A: Very much with the Irish. There's a small bit of Dutch in my mother's family. It ruined the strain. (laugh) My interest in my Irish heritage started when I took a course on Irish literature in college... Before that, it was always kind of neat to say you were Irish, but I didn't know what it meant. My idea of being Irish was feeling perfectly comfortable on St. Patrick's Day and not having to pretend. There wasn't anything outwardly very Irish about any of it... Still, I was always interested in Grandma, my father's mother. She lived with us for awhile, so that's where she would start telling me stories... Grandma used to take me to visit her friend, Mrs. O., and Mrs. O. had a pot of tea on the back burner that had been there since the Book of Exodus, I think, and a smelly old cocker spaniel dog, but it really was marvelous and I always enjoyed tea with Mrs. O., because the two of them would sit around and talk about the old country.

male, 29, Polish ancestry

A: Do I identify myself as Polish? Well, my last name sounds Polish, so it's obvious there, and the people who got to know me well enough know that I have a Polish background.

Q: Do you feel it yourself, though, as part of you?

A: Yeah, I guess I am Polish. I realize that, and yeah, I do.

female, 19, German ancestry

Q: Do you think of yourself as German at all?

A: No, I think of myself as an American, but I like Germany very much. I like to spend part of the year there, every year... I'd still like to go back to the old country... More recently now, since I have taken an interest in going there for three or four years, I think of myself as German a little bit more... I love Germany very much. You could put it that strongly. As part of having a heritage about it, I like it because it's different. It makes you not the same as everyone else. It makes you have something a little bit unique...

female, 71, Jewish

Q: Did your neighborhood influence your identity as a Jew?

A: Yes. I grew up in a Jewish neighborhood. Very lively. The Yiddish theater was there, and I would go to the theater every Saturday afternoon with my mother... I spoke Yiddish until I was 6 years old and then learned English, because my grandmother lived with us, and it was spoken in the house... I also grew up with a big background of Jewish literature. My uncle would just sit with all of us around a table in the evening with apples, and he would read Sholem Aleichem to us, in Yiddish.

female, 65, Italian ancestry

Q: Can you remember any of the things that might have been done around the house to make you more aware of your Italian heritage?

A: Everything was Italian. My parents always had their friends in, and they would sit around the table and talk Italian and my father played cards and they drank wine... This neighborhood was strictly all Italian. My father opened a meat market and a grocery store, and most of his customers were Italian.

black female, 53

... We're Americans. Afro-Americans, whatever you want to call it. But we don't deny our heritage. I was taught Black History as I grew up. There are some schoolteachers in our family, so we know our Black History very well.

male, 20, Greek ancestry

Q: Do you identify yourself with any ethnic group at all?

A: Yes. It's the Greek... I can't get away from the language or the background... It gives you a sense of belonging. Everybody needs a sense of belonging. Some people find it in organizations, drugs, or hobbies. I find it in my heritage, and this is me.

black/Latin female, 18

Q: Do you identify yourself with any ethnic group?

A: Yeah, as being black and Latin. I grew up in two different backgrounds. My parents were from Central America, Honduras, and the majority of the people there are black. But they have a Latin background - they speak Spanish of a dialect. And so I was brought up that way. Since my parents were from there, I learned to speak two languages.... And then we were living in Harlem around the Latin people and the black people, so I kind of identify myself with those two backgrounds.

white female, 31, Irish-English ancestry, married to a black man

Q: Do you try to give your children any kind of ethnic identity?

A: See, my husband is black, so it's very definite in their lives, that they have an ethnic identity, because when you're black, even if you don't feel black, you're always going to be identified as black...

Q: Do you ever identify yourself with a black ethnic group?

A: Sure, at times, because in my life right now, I'm around blacks mostly, and I'm not around whites any more. But I shouldn't say that I identify with them, because I don't belong. That's one thing you realize, that you never belong.

Does everyone have to be interested in his or her ethnic heritage?

male, 66, Irish-English ancestry

Q: Do you identify yourself with any ethnic group?

A: English and Irish, I was told.

Q: Do you remember being told anything about your ancestry?

A: No, we weren't. I'd visit my grandparents a lot, but they never talked to me about my ancestors or anything else. My grandmother and grandfather were quite old; as a matter of fact, my grandfather was feeble, and could hardly get around.

Q: So you really have very little knowledge of where your ancestors came from?

A: Only what I was told. Whether they came over two or three generations behind, I don't know.

female, 31, Irish-English ancestry

Q: Was there much emphasis, when you were growing up, on having an Irish or an English background?

A: Well, because of the fact that there was feuding going on, I think I'm the product of that feuding, and it just turned me off.

Q: Feuding in the neighborhood?

A: No. Feuding in the families. Irish Catholic and Protestant. There was a lot of feuding. My grandmother wouldn't come at certain moments when my other grandmother was there. So I think I got really turned off from the ethnic background. Why they were fighting was so ridiculous to me, as a child. You know, different churches every week, and it was just crazy.

female, 21, Irish-German ancestry

Q: Do you identify yourself with any ethnic group?

A: No, not really.

Q: Do you think that other people identify you with any ethnic group?

A: No. I wouldn't say so.

Q: Could you tell me anything about the history of your family, where they originally came from?

A: I go back... many generations to my great-great-grandparents. My great-great-grandfather came from Germany and my great-great-grandmother came from Ireland.

Q: That's awhile back. Do you have any special pride in having Irish or German ancestors?

A: No.

Q: Do you have any negative feelings at all?

A: It doesn't matter. I think the only time it matters is if it really was stressed in your family, and you really feel that you have strong feelings, emotional kinds of ties. I think sometimes you feel closest - like I probably feel more Irish on St. Patrick's Day than any other time of the year.

Q: Do you feel any association with these ethnic groups at all?

A: No. I'm American. Definitely. There's no association.

female, 79, Jewish who came from Russia

Q: Do you ever think of yourself as Russian?

A: We suffered there. I completely forgot about it, and when I used to dream about Russia I used to cry like hell to come back to here, honest to God. We suffered there. When I was a child, we had pogroms. So how could it be any different, seeing so much. I wanted to see my country again, but they killed my people there. There was nobody left. One man came back and told us there was nobody left in my hometown.

male, 61, Greek ancestry

Q: Do you think there have been any disadvantages to having your background?

A: I don't think so. When I was very young, there was a certain feeling of embarrassment sometimes - of being different. I think almost all children in those days, when I was growing up had that same feeling. This, I suppose, stemmed from an ignorance of their own background, and the good points of their own background. I suppose they felt that they were different from other people, and children wanted to be the same. I remember that I was embarrassed to even speak Greek or hear Greek spoken in the presence of my friends.

male, 20, Dutch-German ancestry

Q: Do you identify yourself with any ethnic group at all?

A: No.

Q: Could you tell me anything of the history of your family, where they came from?

A: Holland and Germany.

Q: Was there ever anything done in your home related to an ethnic heritage?

A: No, not that I can think of.

male, 33, Irish-Italian ancestry

Q: Do you identify yourself with any ethnic group?

A: Yeah, a little bit, I suppose, because of my Irish and Italian heritage. Because that's fairly defined. My mother was half-Irish and half Italian. And my father is a real Heinz 57, and he tends to make up stories about his heritage.

female, 19, Italian-born parents

Q: About how often do you think of yourself as being Italian?

A: Not often. Just on holidays, like Columbus Day.

Q: Did you ever march in the Columbus Day parade?

A: No.

male, 19, German-French-Irish ancestry

Q: Do you know anything about the history of your family, where they came from originally?

A: My father's ancestors came from Germany, and my mother's came from France and Ireland.

Q: Do you ever think of yourself as being German or Irish or anythink like that?

A: Not really. No. Because I think that our culture is so different from theirs, I don't see how I could think of myself as German or Irish.

female, 40, Jewish, Russian ancestry

Q: Do you encourage your two teenage daughters to be Jewish or to be Russian in the same way that you are?

A: My older daughter is enjoying it more so than my younger daughter. My older daughter went to Hebrew school, had a Bas Mitzvah, the whole thing. My other daughter - I couldn't impress her. She just wasn't interested.

male, Italian-born, 64

Q: Do you think of yourself as having a nationality background other than American?

A: I don't understand that. I feel that I'm 100% American because I came to America at the age of 14 - but I still have the Italian heritage and try to keep the old ways.

II. YOUR OWN ETHNIC HERITAGE

B. EXPRESSING YOUR OWN ETHNIC IDENTITY

What kinds of things do people do to express their ethnic heritage?

Is there one way of expressing your heritage that is better than the others?

female, 20, Irish-German ancestry

Q: Do you do anything in relation to your Irish or German background?

A: I myself, no. Irish, or course, are typical basic meat and potatoes people, but Germany - I don't like German food. My mother is always making German potato salad and bratwurst and knockwurst and sauerkraut - but I have to stay away from the stuff. Every so often, I'll dress a little Irish. I used to wear this one outfit where I had corderoy pants tucked inside my boots, a cable knit turtleneck sweater on, and the Irish cap. I look more Irish than I do German, so I looked like the typical Irish immigrant.

Q: Did you do that intentionally?

A: No. It was just the style of the day.

Q: Do you celebrate St. Patrick's Day more than your friends, or at all?

A; I wear green on St. Patrick's Day, and usually go to parties or wear stupid buttons - "Be Proud You're Irish." Usually on St. Patrick's Day, I'm Irish. I usually get into the dressing of the green and stuff like that.

male, 32, Irish ancestry

Q: Are there any things that you do that are related to your Irish heritage in everyday life or on special occasions?

A: Oh, I think there are. If it means belonging to the Ancient Order of Hibernians, or the Northern Aid Society, no... But my education was all parochial. And you get locked into that. It always had to be a parochial school...So I think that kind of existence is kind of reflective of the Irish mentality. Of course, certain celebrations, St. Patrick's Day - everybody in the world is Irish on St. Patrick's Day. People get caught up in the spirit of the thing, and participating in it, say, going to an Irish pub for a St. Patrick's evening. The whole world seems to be Irish on St. Patrick's Day.

female, 27, Irish ancestry

Q; Are there things you do in everday life or on special occasions that are distinctly Irish?

A: I really like the music and a large part of my record collection is of Irish music. I also like to read books on History, and I study Irish now. And I'm teaching my parents about their heritage in a way, because they never knew that much about it- they had little bits... I enjoy making soda bread. It's a marvelous treat. Whenever I get the chance, when I'm going out, I'll drink Guiness or Irish whisky. (Also) I say my prayers in Irish... I find myself with odd little habits that people who have known Irish people tell me I must have picked up from my grandmother.

female, 21, German-Irish-French ancestry

Q: Do you know where your ancestors came from?

A: Germany, Irish, French -

Q: It's a mix?

A: Yeah. It's not exactly one set background.

Q: Do you ever do anything about these backgrounds at all? Do you ever eat any special foods, celebrate any special holidays?

A: No.

Q: It's not that important to you?

A: No, I mean, like if St. Patrick's Day - I like to have fun and celebrate it or anything else, because it's a holiday. But I mean, to get upset over things, to dislike other people because of certain backgrounds, I don't care for that.

Q: If you didn't have any Irish in your background, do you think you'd still celebrate St. Patrick's Day?

A: Sure. Why not? It's fun.

female, 19, German ancestry

... We have the Christmas tree with candles, we have a lot of the meals, sauerbraten, schnitzel. We listen a lot to German records, folk tunes, the polkas, the waltzes. In parties that we had during the summer, it's German music. In 1976 my grandmother bought me a dirndl - a German costume, a German dress. Usually, they use a short blouse that goes under a jumper-type thing. We always had them when we were small...

Q: Do you go to the Oktoberfest in this area?

A: When we can, we go to the ones in our area. Hunter Mountain has a large one, and a couple in the small towns... I've also experienced it in Germany. You get a lot of the Germans at the Oktoberfest - the drinking, the singing. It's just a very exciting time...

male, 61, Greek ancestry

Q: Are there any customs or traditions that you follow now that are part of your Greek heritage?

A: The name days, particularly. We don't celebrate birthdays. We celebrate name days - a saint's days. For instance, my name is John. On St. John's Day, they have a feast. All the people of the community come to honor this particular person, and others who will have the same name, and in this way they will get together... We also have an excellent Greek language paper that we get here from New York City. It's the National Herald. We get it delivered here every day. And that has served to educate the immigrants... It contains all the information that you find in the American papers, plus things that are of interest to Greeks.

male, 20, Greek ancestry

Q: On Easter or Christmas are there any special rituals that come from your Greek heritage?

A: Well, we sing outside the church on Easter night. On Easter Eve, everyone gathers outside with unlit candles. This is more religious. You have a thousand people standing outside the church, and from the altar, they start one light, and they light another candle, and they light another light, and this spreads from the church out to the parking lot out into the crowds from one candle. And that's to celebrate the new life.

Q: Are you involved in any organizations, like clubs or associations?

A: Yeah. Last year I joined the Sons of Pericles. It's nation-wide. It's for all Greeks. It's sort of like a fraternity. They have their annual dances. It's the youth division of the Order of AHEPA.

black male, 19, African ancestry

... I try to eat African dishes. It's like symbolic to me. And some of them I enjoy, and some of them I don't enjoy. Just the fact that I'm eating an African dish.

Q: Have you tried to learn an African leanguage?

A: Well, I had tried to learn Swahili.

Q: How about the holidays? Do you celebrate African holidays?

A: Yes. Kowanza. It is an African Christmas, Kowanza. Everybody gets together and just eats and eats and eats. And everybody drinks.

black female, 53

Q: Are there things that you do in terms of having a black heritage?

A: Oh, well, I eat what you call "soul food." And we learned our own black history. It bothers me when I read in the textbooks that all our blacks are denying their heritage. That's a lot of bull.

female, 65, Jewish

...I am President of the local group of the Workmen's Circle, which is strongly Jewish, not religiously... I am very active in the Sisterhood of my Temple. I'm an officer, a member of the Board, have been for a long time, and I'm almost totally involved. I go to services every Friday night, and I am a member of the Board of Directors of the Greater Albany Jewish Federation. And I'm still not that religiously oriented, although I'm Temple oriented. I light candles Friday night if I remember. But it's not a ritual. My husband fasts on Yom Kippur, but I don't fast. I never did, and I don't think I could.

male, 29, Polish ancestry

Q: Are there things that you do related to your Polish ancestry?

A: Oh, yeah. For example, Christmas, there is a tradition in Polish houses to have a Christmas vigil feast, and it has to do with the Catholic religion. It's basically a family meal that you have fish at, you have a little wine. You have the family over, and they have what they call the breaking of the oplatek, which is like a little wafer. It's the same thing like Holy Communion. Everybody takes a piece and shares with everybody else, and gives wishes for a good Christmas or a good New Year, or whatever...

... If I see something about Poland, I'll mention it to someone who I feel would be interested - my own family usually.

male, 42, Polish ancestry

Q: Are any of the customs that you follow from your ethnic heritage?

A: I guess primarily in foods. I happen to enjoy some of the Polish foods. Again, it's like anything else, when you are brought up with something, when you eat Polish dishes all your entire life, you enjoy it. And I enjoy cooking that, too. There's a group of people that belong to the Holy Name Society over at St. Casimir's, a Polish church in Arbor Hill. And every Christmas, I'll go over there, and I'll cook Polish dishes for them. I do that kind of thing because I enjoy it.

Q: What about in terms of things like books and magazines? Do you get anything in the Polish language, or do you speak the language?

A: Yes, I can read and write.

Q: Do you ever get an opportunity to speak in Polish?

A: Well, speaking, yes, because I'm president of the Polish club, and I have the opportunity there, and at the Holy Name Society and at the Church to practice at least speaking the language.

female, 33, Italian ancestry

Q: Are there things that you do in everyday life or on special occasions that are related to your Italian heritage?

A: On holidays, in particular. We keep very strong to the Italian tradition. My mom started me on the Christmas tradition of the wooden shoes. In Italy, the kids would put out wooden shoes, and if they were good, they would get candy and nice fruits, and things like that. And if they were bad, they would get charcoal and orange peels. In recent years, I've kept wooden shoes out at Christmas time, and filled them with candy and the like. I always helped my mother prepare the traditional Christmas Eve meal, which is 7 fish, 13 kinds of fruit, and that kind of thing. We are a very religious family, and in that sense, that's very ethnic. We keep with a lot of religious traditions, as well. I'm a very good Italian cook. I keep up a correspondence with my family in Italy. If there is an Italian-made film or something of that nature that's written, I always try to read it when it comes out.

female, 52, Italian ancestry

Q: Do you ever think of yourself as being Italian?

A: Well, yes, when I grew up, that's about all I spoke was the Italian language. It was an Italian neighborhood and my parents came from Italy.

Q: Do you still speak it?

A: Yes. I have to - my mother lives with us.

male, 64, Italian-born

Q: Do you follow any of the customs of your ethnic heritage?

A: Well, I try to follow all the customs, as they are. As a matter of fact, On Feb. 16, we are having a Mardi Gras, that is a masquerade dance. I'm the chairman. It's in the Community Center in Albany. And we try to bring the costumes, and the dance, the tarantella. As a matter of fact, last year my wife and I won first prize for costume dress. It was authentic.

Q: Do you speak Italian at all?

A: Yes. Every day.

Q: Do you read anything that is written in Italian?

A: Yeah, sure. I got one magazine today. These keep me well informed with all the happenings for the Italians.

Q: Are you involved with Italian immigrants today?

A: I belong to the American Committee on Italian Migration, and have been active for 27 years with this. We try to help them, like citizenship papers, maybe jobs, and help them in other different ways... Last year, I became a Cavalier, or a Knight, as you wish. The President of the Republic of Italy bestows on you the honor of Cavalier.

male, 20, Italian ancestry

Q: Do you do anything special related to having an Italian background?

A: Mainly in the foods we eat. Like our tradition on Sunday, which is a long established tradition. I think every Italian family used to have macaroni dinner on Sundays, usually the noontime meal. The immediate family gets together. Sometimes my grandparents come for dinner and stuff like that. I think I'm Americanized except for the food and everything.

Q: Do you speak the Italian language?

A: I took Italian in High School. I took 3 years of it. But I'm not too fluent in it. And the only Italian words I learned at home I wouldn't want to repeat.

male, 69, Russian ancestry

Q: Are there any things that you do related to your heritage?

A: I do adhere to Russian customs - customs of the Church. My mother and her sister would never say, "Hello, how are you?" when they entered a house. The first words out of their mouth was, "Glory to Jesus Christ." Then they would talk, visit. Then when the visitation was over, my mother would say, "Glory to God." That was something that they did and I don't do. I think that this culture that we had is gone, although I am religious.

Are people interested in visiting the homeland of their ancestors? What would it be like?

female, 18, black/Hispanic ancestry

... I went to Honduras about five years ago. It was interesting to see all the African rituals that they still kept, and when my grandma took me to this one ceremony called "laguna" which is in the lagoon, and all these women were dancing, chanting, and dancing, and it was weird to me, because when I got out there, I felt that I was automatically in Africa. There were huts all over the place, and people were dressed in native costumes, and food was all over the place, but it was not to be touched- it was for the dead. And they were to take all of the food at the end of the tent and put it in a hole for the dead people. And it really bugged me out because I never saw anything like that. When I came back home and told my mother, she said she had never been to any of those ceremonies.

male, 61, Greek ancestry

Q: Did you find as a 13 year-old boy, life to be very much different when you went to live in Greece?

A: It was quite a bit different. When we lived in Vermont, it was in a small town, and when we went to Greece, we went to a big city. There was quite a change... There were only five families who lived in Vermont that spoke Greek there, and just prior to our going to Greece, these five families got together to teach you, because the people in those days wanted their children to learn the Greek language. And when we went to Greece, it was very difficult because I had to learn a different type of Greek. It had to be more complicated, because the Greek that I spoke prior to going there had a more limited vocabulary.

male, 19, German-French-Irish ancestry

Q: Would you ever want to visit Ireland, Germany, or France?

A: No. I'd like to visit Greece. See where our civilization came from. I'd like to see all that before I'd see the other, so I guess there are no especially strong ties to them.

male, 32, Irish ancestry

Q: When you were in Ireland, how did you find the people?

A: I wanted to get away from the group I was with and go out and meet the average everyday Irishman. I found this rather difficult at times, because it was hard to drum up a conversation, because they were suspicious of me. But after you got through that shell, they were very friendly and very open.

Q: Did you feel at home in Ireland?

A: I think that it's something that you always had heard about as a child, and you had read about or participated in St. Patrick's Day parades and wanting to go there. And after going there, you know you realize that it was just part of your heritage. Yes, I felt a close affinity to the people, but I realized at the same time that I was an American, and I couldn't be an Irishman. I could be a hyphenated Irishman, but I could never be a complete Irishman, because I wasn't born there.

male, 20, Greek ancestry

... When I went to Greece about two years ago, I went to the same island where my relatives are - second cousins, third cousins, and so on. I went to the actual town where my grandfather was brought up, my great-grandfather was brought up, and I saw their houses, and I saw where they are buried. And you can see the line, and you can trace where everyone's from. I felt like I lived there even before I was there... But you're still an American there.

male, 21, Italian-German ancestry

Q: Did you have any special feeling when you went to the town in Italy that your ancestors came from?

A: Yes. I loved it. When I went to Italy, I felt at home. And tha 's unusual for me, because I don't feel at home in many places. I felt I was with my family, and I've never even talked to these people before.

Q: Do you think you'd feel that way in Germany also?

A: Yeah, I was in Germany also, and I felt comfortable there, too. When I went to Germany, they'd hear my last name, which sounds German, and they'd flip out.

Q: So they made you feel at home?

A: Yeah, but I felt more at home in Italy than in Germany. Because that's the way I was brought up.

II. YOUR OWN ETHNIC HERITAGE

C. FEELING YOUR ETHNIC IDENTITY

If someone identified with the same ethnic group as you, would you feel more comfortable with them?

male, 21, Italian-German ancestry

Q: Do you feel a special closeness to Italian or to German people?

A: Italian people.

Q: Do you still, though, feel a closeness to the German culture?

A: No. Being that I was brought up with the Italians, it's more or less Italian... I like their traditions, and I feel close to the Italian people. I don't understand what they are saying, but I feel close to them.

female, 38, Irish-English ancestry

Q: You said your husband is Irish.

A: And American.

Q: He has an Irish background?

A: And English, just like me.

Q: Really! Did you plan to marry someone with your background?

A: No. But I think we had a lot of similarities in our background, and it made it easier, I think, at that particular point in our meeting. We identified with each other, and so friendship grew faster because on our first date, it was St. Patrick's Day. He took me to an Irish pub in New York, just for fun.

female, 18, black-Hispanic ancestry

...Right now, I have a Dominican roommate. So we are similar and that's how we get along. We both speak Spanish. And we can identify with each other because she knew where I was coming from as far as culture was concerned, and I knew where she was coming from. So we're best of friends.

male, 19, German-French-Irish ancestry

Q: If you met someone with an Irish name, would you feel that you have something in common with him or her?

A: Well, I would have something in common, but there are Irish people that I wouldn't like, too. It doesn't really matter. I don't put too much emphasis on it. Like if there are two people and one is Italian and another is Irish, I'm not gonna reject the Italian person because he is Italian.

female, 65, Italian ancestry

Q: Are most of your friends Italian today?

A: Yes. All Italians. I can't really say that. I have a few Jewish and a few American friends, too. But I personally stick closer to the Italians.

Q: Would you say that it's a matter of choosing people who are Italian?

A: No. It's people that I grew up with. I maintained that friendship all through - growing up with them, going to school with them, living in the area with them.

male, 20, Greek ancestry

Q: Were most of the students in your school Greek?

A: No. There were, in my graduating class, maybe 3 of us. In my college class, right now, there's 2½. He's not full Greek. That sounds a little funny, but he didn't know he was Greek. He told me one day his mother was Greek and I said, "Well, you're Greek." He said, "I'm half-Greek."

Q: Did you feel a closeness to him after that?

A: Yeah. He was familiar with some things that I was. Even the language you can fool with. You can do a lot with a language in a group of people when no one knows what you're saying. You feel a little edge.

female, 64, Jewish

Q: Do you think that you feel more comfortable with Jewish people?

A: I don't know. Maybe it would be more comfortable. I don't feel uncomfortable with non-Jewish people. I have several friends that are not Jewish from when I was working. We're still friends, corresponding. But I would say that I would feel more comfortable with Jewish people, with my own people.

male, 29, Polish ancestry

Q: Do you find that you feel more comfortable with someone if you find that they have a Polish ancestry?

A: Oh, I guess if someone says my name is "_____ski". I say,

"Well, there's someone who's Polish." It's just something I notice. I don't feel that he or she is in my corner. I do feel, in a sense, a bond. I imagine if I was in a room full of women and I saw one man - I would feel some kind of bond with just that person, also.

Can anyone be proud of their own ethnic heritage?

Does everyone have to be proud of his or her ethnic heritage?

female, 27, Irish ancestry

Q: Can you possibly describe your feelings about being Irish?

A: I'm very proud of it. I'm proud of the ancient ways, as I read more and more of the history. I'm proud of the modern Irish as well, in that there's been so much in this country that would not be as it is today at all if it wasn't for the Irish immigrants who couldn't get any other jobs but pounding rails, pounding nails in a railroad, or digging a canal. So I think a great deal of what makes this country great is provided by my ancestors. And that makes me very proud.

female, 28, Jewish ancestry

Q: Do you have any feelings about your heritage?

A: Well, in a sense, I resent it, because of when I was small. People really put down the Jews. You know, I resent that... In a sense, I'm ashamed of being Jewish.

female, 65, Italian ancestry

Q: Can you describe the feelings that you have about having an Italian heritage?

A: Well, I'm proud to be Italian. I certainly am not ashamed of it. I'm very proud of it. Because if you cut my heart open, you'd find the map of Italy. It's an awful thing to say, but I can't help it.

female, 62, Irish ancestry

... In my parents' generation, they never wanted to admit they just came over from Ireland, because everybody looked down on them. When my mother met my father, his name sounded Irish. So she hated to tell people what his name was. Well, my father's aunt had three sons, and she gave them anything but an Irish name, although the last name was Irish. She never would give them an Irish first name. Because she had no use for the Irish.

male, 61, Greek ancestry

Q: Would you say you are proud of your heritage?

A: Yes. Very much so. For many reasons. I believe that Greece was one of the first countries that were civilized, especially as the European civilization is concerned. We live in a democracy , and when we think about democracy, it actually worked in Athens... And Greek was one of the main languages of the Roman Empire at that time, so it played a big part in spreading the New Testament. And of course. in the Middle Ages, you had another resurging of Greek civiliation, in which Greeks contributed to the Renaissance... Also the vocabulary in English owes a lot to the Greek language. The vast majority of medical terms, for instance, are of Greek derivation. And we continue to borrow words from Greek - astronaut, apogee, perigee - and so on...

male, 21, German-Irish ancestry

... I think World War II had a lot to do with people about my father's age not relating to being German, you know. He was my age during World War II and he probably wasn't that proud of saying he was German, I would imagine.

male, 20, Italian ancestry

Q: I'm interested in your feelings about having an Italian background. Do you feel any pride in relation to it?

A: I feel maybe more proud of it. I don't feel any shame whatsoever that I'm Italian. But in fact, I like to feel proud that I'm Italian.

Q: Is there anything that makes you feel that way especially, or is it a feeling you always have with you?

A: I think it's a feeling that was sort of like an instinct that was with me when I was born. Family has given me that feeling. And somehow, I can't get rid of it. I don't think I'd want to.

If you have more than one ethnic heritage, do you have to choose, to be proud of only one?

male, 21, Italian-German ancestry

I'm proud of being German. And I'm proud of being Italian. I'll never be ashamed of it. I'm proud of it. I don't go around bragging. I never even mention it to people. I never, never, unless I'm asked. I'm just proud. I don't go to everybody and say, I'm this - I'm that... It's just self-satisfaction. I feel proud of myself - I feel proud of the culture.

male, 22, black, who is a Suni Muslim

Q: Do you have any special feelings about being a Suni Muslim?

A: Yes. I just feel good about it. That's the only feeling there is.

Q: Pride?

A: Yeah. There's pride. There's pride in everyone's culture.

Q: Do you have any special feelings about being black?

A: I'm just glad I'm black. I never knock it.

female, 38, Irish-English ancestry

Q: I'm interested in your feelings about your Irish or English background. Are there any special feelings?

A: I guess every once in awhile I feel superior, and I admit it, because I'm British. I feel like the British are survivors; I'm proud of having this heritage. I think it's produced a lot of conflicts in me.

Q: In what way?

A: Well, in the first place, I'm 50% British Protestant, and 50% Irish Catholic - and I go around saying a lot of kind of strange things. Sometimes I worry - I'm stereotyping. Am I too romantic? Am I too emotional? Will I become an alcoholic? Because of this Irish background, you see. But basically, I'm happy - not unhappy because I'm not something else. I think I would have been just as proud being Russian or German or French, Italian or whatever.

female, 20, Irish-German ancestry

Q: Do you identify with any ethnic groups?

A: Well, with the Irish, of course. That's about all. The other part of me is German, and I don't like to identify with them too much.

Q: Why is that?

A: Because I have stereotypes of Germans and Nazis.

Q: Really! Have you heard that from other people?

A: Not really. but when you think of Germany, most people think of World War II and Hitler and stuff like that, so I kind of lean towards the Irish side. And I look more Irish than I do German.

female, 43, Italian-Polish ancestry

... My father was Italian, born in Italy, and my mother was Polish, born in this country. I learned the best of both cultures... Well, when you got a father that says, "Hey, you're Italian," and you got a mother that says, "Hey, but half of you is Polish," then you don't forget either one of them. Now my sister decided that she didn't want to be half Polish and half Italian any more. She would rather be all Italian. So she traded off with my brother, and so now he's all Polish, and she's all Italian. But... I love being both. I like to go back to traditions. There's nothing without them.

Because you are proud of your heritage, does that mean you think less of people who do not share your background?

female, 33, Italian ancestry

... When I grew up, Frank Sinatra and Tony Bennett were big names. Dean Martin and all the Italian entertainers were really big. Sophia Loren. So that gave you a sense of ethnic pride. I never really felt isolated. And as a matter of fact, I always felt sorry for people who weren't Italian.

male, 82, Jewish

Q: Do you have any strong feelings about being Jewish itself?

A: Not specifically. I am not one of those people that believe that I belong to the chosen people. As a matter of fact, I hate that word, "chosen". It doesn't do any good for any group that considers itself, "I am chosen." By whom? They don't need anything like that... I detest it today when I see it in the scriptures... If somebody believes in that, it gives him a sense of superiority and makes the other seem inferior....

male, 29, Polish ancestry

... I'm not ashamed that I'm Polish. In a sense, I'm proud. But proud means you're disgusted about something else, or something that you shouldn't be proud of. It's just a fact. It's the same thing. I'm a man, or I'm white - I'm Polish. I'm not ashamed of it, but I'm not saying I'm boastingly proud of it. Association with a group and trying to glean some type of prestige I think is kind of ridiculous. White pride, black pride, I think that's a bit much. It sounds like you're making up for something. You have to tell yourself that you're proud of being something. So like I said, I never thought of myself as being better, or definitely not worse, but... I'm Polish - I'm Polish. I'm from this neighborhood. That's OK.

male, 50, German-born

... Well, I think a person who is not proud of his heritage, it means he is forsaking his own family. I don't think there is absolutely any person who can say his family was a total failure. Every ethnic group in the past 100 years all bettered themselves. Any ethnic person to me, if they say, "I don't want to hear anything about Germany, I don't want to hear anything about Polish," or whatever, shows to me these persons are insecure themselves. They're afraid of their own heritage. Maybe they're ashamed... There is no reason to be ashamed of your heritage. I am here now, and I have part of this heritage. I should try to improve on it - my background, my heritage. I make it better for my children.

What does it mean to be _____?

black female, 18, Hispanic ancestry

Q: What does it mean to you to be black?

A: To me, being black is having to struggle, and just knowing that that struggle probably is never going to end.

Q: How about being Latin? Does that mean anything to you?

A: Latin? Not really...

female, 65, Italian ancestry

Q: What does it mean to you personally to be Italian?

A: Well, I don't know if I can explain it, but my mother was Italian, my father was Italian, I was brought up Italian, just brought up to love everything that was Italian - all the beauty in Italy.

female, 75, Jewish ancestry

Q: What does it actually mean to you personally to be Jewish?

A: What does it mean to me personally? It means I'm a little superior to anybody else. We've got something that they haven't got.

female, 33, Italian ancestry

Q: What does it mean to you personally to be an Italian-American?

A: I guess it means that I have kind of a double pride. I have a pride in being an American, and in American tradition, and that I can take even more pride in that tradition because of my ancestry. I think it makes me a better person...

male, 20, Greek ancestry

Q: What does it mean for you to be Greek?

A: Well, I've got the heritage, I've got the background. That means I know where I'm coming from, and I have an idea where I should go. I have an idea of what my values should be. I know I can seek out my own, and it's happened before, not just in Albany. Even in a Greek restaurant, I find a Greek, they'll tell you things they wouldn't ordinarily tell people they just met. There is a closeness.

female, 27, Irish ancestry

Q: Could you tell me what it means to you personally to be Irish?

A: That there is a strength, some kind of a perserverance that in spite of things that happen, you get through it... There's a lot of things that came from Irish culture, and we just quietly watch. We don't have to go around beating big drums, saying this is what we've done. But it's just a richness. And there's a lot of simplicity.

female, 19, German ancestry

Q: Could you tell me what it means to you personally to be German?

A: Some of the things are just fun to do. Music is a lot of fun to listen to. But - it's very difficult. It's sort of something that I like a lot, yet it's hard to explain.

female, 64, Jewish

Q: Can you tell me what it means for you personally to be Jewish?

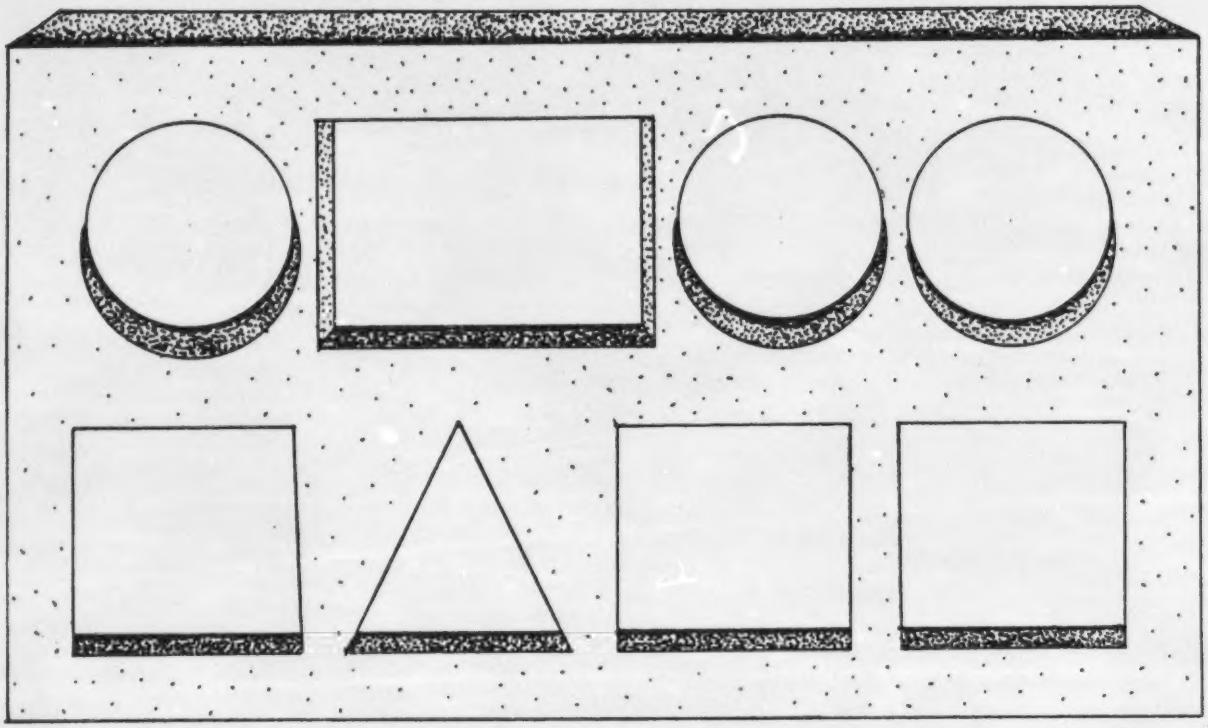
A: Well, I'm inclined to say there's a strong family tie, but nowadays, you know. There used to be a strong family tie. And for holidays, the whole family would get together and you had to go see your grandmothers, and things like that. But that's disappearing. I really don't know what to say, what it means to me to be Jewish. I'm just Jewish and that's all there is to it.

male, 29, Polish ancestry

Q: Can you tell me what it means to you personally to have a Polish ancestry?

A: ... Just because I'm Polish, I don't mean that any of the honor or the glory rubs off on me, but the Polish are an interesting people. I think it's a very good people. The Polish people, if I were going to be lumped, I would probably be lumped with them, and it's not a bad crowd to be lumped with. Let's put it that way.

BEING



DIFFERENT

III. BEING DIFFERENT

People have come to America from many different parts of the world. And their many descendants have different ways of relating to their own heritage.

How do these differences affect our daily lives?

A. PREJUDICE

What is prejudice?

Can people ever face prejudice because of their ethnic identity?

female, 21, German-Irish ancestry

Q: Was there ever any discrimination or prejudice when you went to school?

A: No. One thing interesting is, I lived in an all-white town. For awhile, this black fellow became friendly with this bunch of white kids. I don't know how he met them or anything, because he lived several miles away. He was going to a pretty bad school and the school wasn't giving him what he wanted. So he wanted to switch and go to Waterford-Halfmoon. He switched, and the kids all accepted him, and the teachers all accepted him. And somebody somewhere started getting the police force to go after him for this and that, and the other thing. He was really run out of town. And any time we get any black people to move in town, they get run out very quickly. I don't know exactly what happens, but ther things happen and they just don't stay. And I don't think that most of the town tries to do it. I think that it's a very small group that does it.

female, 65, Italian ancestry

Q: Did you ever come across prejudice or stereotypes when you were in high school?

A: Oh, yes. When we were kids, I think the Irish were very prejudiced against the Italians.

Q: Was it mostly in fun, or were there any serious problems?

A: No serious problems, but I think they really kept us down and kept us in the background. It was hard for any of the Italians to do anything, to get jobs because they were always kept down. I don't know

if I should say Irish, what word I should use, but to us, anybody that was American was Irish at that time. That's my mother's and father's point of view. Anybody that was American was Irish, and... I think they really were hated by the "Irish" people.

male, 32, Irish ancestry

... A million people died because they were Irish. They were considered the scum of the earth. In Boston in the 1920's and 1930's they still had the signs that said, "Irish need not apply." And I can remember my mother telling stories that my grandfather told about walking to Church. The Irish always dressed when they went to Church on Sunday. People would throw stones at them. They didn't have any paved streets or sidewalks and there would be mud puddles, and it would splash them, simply because they were Irish and they were going to Church.

black male, 18, from Africa

Q: While you've been in the United States, have you come across much discrimination or prejudice toward you?

A: The first thing that I noticed was when I went into a store and somebody was following me around all over the place. And I couldn't understand why. Whenever I started asking about the price, and they noticed my accent, they asked me where I was from, and I said that I was from Africa. They stopped following me. And I thought maybe they have something against the black Americans, because it is true that when people find out I'm African, they have a different attitude to me than they do to a black American. They seem to trust us more than they trust the black Americans. I noticed that they didn't do it to the white people but they did it to the black people. And I felt maybe they thought I was going to steal, but otherwise, prejudice is sort of hidden. It's in the small things.

male, 19, Jewish

Q: Have you ever personally been the victim of discrimination or prejudice?

A: Sure. At times, I think everyone is, you know. I can't think of an instance where I wasn't allowed to do something because I was Jewish, but just people looking at you - it's like - oh, he's Jewish. Just dating a girl, you know, and her finding out you're Jewish - it's "no, really!" "Yeah, I am. It's not that weird, you know."

female, 33, Italian ancestry

... I get invited to dinner all the time, and inevitably, they'll cook Italian food. One Irish family invited me over and they made lasagna with cottage cheese and I almost died...and I thought I'd go and get a really good Irish meal. I was hoping it would be something like corned beef and cabbage, which I really like. And they do that kind of thing all the time. And there have been comments in the past, like, look at that

red dress you have on - it's typically Italian - you like loud colors. You know, that sort of thing.

Q: Nothing viscious though?

A: Italian jokes I think are the most - any ethnic joke, I find exceedingly cruel simply because it just zeroes in on a stereotype. There are some of them that are clever, but most of them I find - and there are people who, when they know you are of a particular ethnic background, they will just come in every day and lay one on you, so to speak. And I have a tendency to discourage that kind of thing.

What happens to the children of immigrants who are born in America?

Can they still face prejudice?

male, 50, born in Germany

Q: Have you ever faced discrimination or prejudice?

A: Well, on and off. In the 23 years that I've been here, I would say that perhaps personally it happened to me that one fellow I remember said, "you foreign bums," and another time, I remember some kind of remark. But I think it's more pronounced with the children. The remarks are made - "Nazis" and "German bums," and so on and so forth. And even to the degree, when my oldest son was young, that he would be even excluded from playing with them...

Q: Did your younger son have the same problems as your older son?

A: Same thing. But the oldest one had it worse... But I would definitely blame the parents of the children who really execute that type of bad feelings against the children. The children always reflect what the parents taught. Until, of course, when they get 14, 16 and up, then they will express their own feelings.

Q: But as your older son got older...

A: Then it disappeared. Of course, in the high school, there was perhaps a few occasions where he would be harassed with some remarks, but that would be because he would dress perhaps German, you know. He would not have been subjected to this harassment if there would not have been a sign that could be recognized. There is always a sign there that they would recognize that he's not 100% pure American.

female, 43, Polish-Italian ancestry

Q: Have you ever faced prejudice because of your ethnic heritage?

A: Well, there were problems. I went to a school in Watervliet, which was a French school, a French church, although I didn't know that

for many a year afterward. Only French people were supposed to go there, which was something. I mean, I went all through there, and graduated from there. When my brother had his first child and tried to get him baptized, the priest threw him out because he was Italian and Polish. And that's true. And in fact, my brother has not been to Church since.

I've always felt Polish and Italian people got a rotten break, because there are so many jokes about them. If it wasn't Italian, it was Polish. Always the butt of something. You'd go to parties and people would know who you were and there'd be the joke, about how the Italians form a firing squad - they form a circle. So it is funny to a certain extent, but it gets to you after awhile. Why don't they pick on someone else for a change. And I feel the hostility.

Can people ever face prejudice from other people who share their same ethnic heritage?

female, 62, Irish ancestry

... When my mother was a young girl in New York City, Irish people were coming over then, and they called them "greenhorns." On the floor above their house, her father ran a little grocery store down on Broome St., way down on the Lower East Side of New York. And she said they'd bring groups of "greenhorn" over and they would all be in the same place. And they'd be doing the Irish jig. Now her mother and father were both born in this country, so they were a little different, you know. Oh, my mother used to be furious with them. She had absolutely no use for them although she was of Irish descent. Well, mamma said that in the schools, everybody - they never wanted to admit that they just came over from Ireland, because everybody looked down on them.

female, 75, Jewish ancestry

...When I lived in the South, the German Jews had a superior attitude. They thought they were a little bit better, and for the longest while, I was there a good many years before they said hello. Hitler had to come along to give them a "hit in the head" - you see, when Hitler gave them a "hit", then they found that they were equal to the Orthodox Jews - that they weren't better. But before that, they had a superior attitude.

white female married to a black male, 31

... In the 13 years that I've been married, I've learned so much, really. Like my mother-in-law, my husband is her darkest child, and he gets the least attention, and this is really true. He could never understand it until he grew older and realized that the color consciousness among blacks is just as fierce as it is among whites, you know.

Can prejudice ever be reduced?

male, 21, German-Irish ancestry

... Where I went to school, they closed my high school down a few times because of race riots for weeks. If you were white at the time of the race riot, you were on my side. If you were black, you weren't on my side. But now that I'm out of high school and into college, it doesn't make that big of a difference. I have a lot of black friends now - now that I got out of high school. Going to school changes the way I thought and being away from that environment at the high school where it was pretty rough - it's changed me a lot. But I don't think it's changed the way they feel about me very much.

female, 62, Irish ancestry

Q: Have you personally been the victim of prejudice or discrimination because of your Irish heritage?

A: I grew up in a small town. In those days, the Catholics and Protestants there didn't associate at all. Now isn't that strange? When I go there now, I just can't believe what I see. I remember there had been a dancing school there, and my father wanted to enroll us in the dancing school for young children. But no Catholics joined - it was all Protestants. Years ago, the Catholic Church frowned on joining Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts. A family came up and moved into town from New York City and the children joined the Scouts. The priest had a sermon against it. But now, when I go back there, it's just hard for me to believe. There's intermarriage now. In those days, it would be unbelievable, but how it's changed in all these years.

female, 65, Jewish

... When he was serving with the Army in Germany, our son married a German woman and stayed there. We went to West Germany to meet our grandson and to see our son for the first time in 6 years. My husband hadn't wanted to go. He wanted nothing to do with Germany. I went with great reservation. I knew I would hate it. I was expected to absolutely hate it, but I changed my opinion. We found German people to be very sympathetic. I have friends who still shudder when I say I went to Germany. And I have friends who will do a double shudder when I say I have a German granddaughter. But I don't. In fact, I hope to go back in a year or two.

male, 61, Greek ancestry

Q: Do you think there is prejudice against people of Greek ancestry in the United States today?

A: I don't think so. Not today. I encountered instances of prejudice, yes. Up until World War II and maybe a little after. I think there was a tremendous change, especially during Kennedy's administration. I remember John Kennedy made a statement to the effect that the people of foreign heritage could be very useful as American citizens by continuing their knowledge of their ancestry, language, and so forth. Because America is a melting pot, and we are a worldwide power. You need the knowledge of various languages, so therefore, people of different ancestry could contribute much.

When people frequently associate with other people of different ethnic groups, do they become less prejudiced?

male, 21, German-Irish ancestry

... I went to school with a lot of Jewish kids. They didn't live in my neighborhood and I didn't live in theirs, but I got put in an academically talented program. There was probably, in that program about 80% Jewish kids, and I hung around with a lot of Jewish kids. I went to a thousand Bar Mitzvahs when I was a kid, and I never had one, you know, and it was a rip-off, too. Because everybody'd always get gifts, and I was always giving gifts. It kind of set me aside. They all knew each other, and they probably went to Temple together, and everything, and they all had money, and their parents knew each other- but I had to go to school with them and I hung around with them. But as soon as I got old enough to go my own way, we just separated. And I don't really know them that well any more. As a matter of fact, during the separation in the 9th grade when we were going into high school, I started disliking Jewish kids.

white female, 31, married to a black male

Q: Has your family accepted your marriage?

A: There was a lot of bitterness in the beginning because they, of course, had a lot more fears that I did about it. They were trying to get me to be fearful about what I was doing, and I didn't see any reason to. But as my husband proved himself, so to speak, things have relaxed. And we're able to be ourselves around each other now, and that's really nice. It's been 13 years now. It's a has-been. If they have their own feelings, they kind of keep them to themselves. I think they kind of respect him now, after all these years. They never knew him, they never would get to know him until lately. The kids are older now, and I guess my mother is getting older. She wants the grand-kids around her now.

female, 18, black/Latin ancestry

Q: Did you start to meet a lot of white people when you were in high school?

A: I was going to school in Harlem for 8 years, and when I got to high school, it was right downtown on 46th St. I got to meet more white people. I found out what they were all about, and I became friends with them. You make friends just because they want to be your friend.

female, 79, Jewish

Q: Do you mix with people who are not Jewish also?

A: Yeah, we have Christians here. I don't mix with them too much. I am not used to it. I mix more with the Jews. There's all kinds of Gentiles. I have a few that help me, and they love me, and I love them. So I forget about their religion. When you get involved with good people, you forget about the religion. You just know that they're there, and you need them.

III. BEING DIFFERENT

B. DISCRIMINATION

What is discrimination? Is it the same thing as prejudice? Can people be hurt by discrimination?

male, 21, German-Irish ancestry

Q: Do you think that people who have Irish or German backgrounds are victims of discrimination at all?

A: No, I don't think they're victims of discrimination because I don't think being Irish or German in this country any more is being in a minority group. There are so many, and they're so mixed now, I don't think you're really in a minority group if you're Irish or German.

female, 19, Italian ancestry

Q: Do you think that Italians in this country face discrimination or prejudice at all?

A: Yeah. Not our American-born Italians do, but our Italian-born Italians do. They definitely do.

Q: Do you think that's true of all people who are foreign-born?

A: Yeah, I do. A lot of foreign people, because Americans know they don't know the language or anything.

male, 69, Jewish

Q: Have you faced any disadvantages because of being Jewish?

A: Well, one time I was offered a job, and if my name had been spelled with two "nn's" on the end, they would have given me the job.

Q: You felt you were discriminated against?

A: Oh, definitely. Because if it had one "n" it meant it was a Jewish name. It didn't bother me too much. I was a young man at the time. I felt a little hurt about it. I felt more hurt against the person who was recommending me for this job, because I thought he knew me, and apparently he didn't know I was Jewish.

Q: Do you think that would happen today?

A: I think it is happening today. I think it still happens.

black male, 22

Q: Do you think there's much discrimination against blacks today?

A: It's not as bad as it used to be, but there is some. Like when I went for a job, this white guy came about 15 minutes before me. They gave him a job application and told him to come back. I went in there, they told me they didn't have no applications.

female, 65, Italian ancestry

Q: Did you ever come across prejudice or stereotypes when you went to school?

A: Oh, yes. When we were kids, I think the Irish were very prejudiced against the Italians.

Q: Was it mostly in fun or were there any serious problems?

A: No serious problems but I think they really kept us down and kept us in the background, and it was hard for any of the Italians to do anything, to get jobs, because they were always kept down... If we wanted to go to certain schools, we weren't allowed in because we were Italians.

Q: Legally not allowed in, or they just wouldn't admit you?

A: They didn't have room or something like that. They'd put it so - you know.

male, 29, Polish ancestry

Q: Do you think that there is much discrimination toward Polish people today?

A: I haven't really seen it. You might say there's some Polish jokes, but I've heard Polish people saying Polish jokes to me, so you take it as a good-natured thing. If the guy really means it, then I can say he's attacking me. He's trying to get a rise out of me. If somebody would say something like that, I would consider them highly insensitive.

Q: Do you think your Polish heritage would ever prevent you from getting a job or getting into an educational program or anything like that?

A: No. I don't think it ever has. I haven't experienced that type of discrimination because of my background. I get along OK with other people and they get along with me.

female, 67, Jewish

Q: Have you found there to be any disadvantages to being Jewish in the United States?

A: When my brother was going to school, his marks were excellent and he was told that if he would wait a year, he would be accepted to Albany Med., but their quota had already been filled. They had their two Jews.

Q: They told him that?

A: They told him that right out. And my parents could not afford to send him out of town, so he waited and finally went to Albany Med. the next year.

female, 14, Russian-born

Q: Do people ever single you out because you come from Russia?

A: Yeah, in class, like sometimes in social studies, I recently made a presentation about Russia. Whenever we talk about Russia in class, I notice nobody ever opens their mouth. It's like they expect me to answer all the questions. Even the teacher doesn't want to talk about it, because - if there's somebody sitting in class who knows about Russia, why don't we let her speak. Like this Wednesday I made a presentation. Everybody wrote questions and of that group, there were most people who didn't care, because most of the questions were, "What kind of clothing is there in Russia," and "Do they have McDonald's?" That's all they asked. And I was just surprised. Those questions were everything but intelligent.

black male, 19

Q: Have you faced discrimination as a black person?

A: ... It was in a store in Manhattan. It was a woman's store, but they had just introduced a men's department and I applied for the position and got it. One day a woman came up to me and said, "Can you tell me where such and such department is?" I said, "No, but I can help you find it." She said, "No, no, that's not necessary. Find someone who's qualified." I said, "What do you mean, I work here just like they do," and she said, "No, you can't find anything that I want desirable for me because you're not qualified." I said, "Am I supposed to be the cleanup person, sweeping the floors, emptying the ashtrays in this place?" She looked at me and said, "Well, that's what your people do, isn't it?" I just started laughing. The woman got very upset because I was laughing. She began to raise her voice, and the manager came over and asked her what the problem was. She told him that I was insulting her... That was one time when I felt that I was discriminated against. But it didn't affect me at all, you see. Also, a lot of times, when I go to a department store, and when you hand the person your money and they give you the change, it is like they drop the change from very high - they don't want to touch your hand or that type of thing, you know. I look at that as some sort of prejudice or discrimination.

female, 33, Italian ancestry

...During the Depression my mother knew the real hatred that was exhibited by many Americans towards the Italians, and my mother had then been refused shoes for my brother from the welfare department. The only time she went, she was totally opposed to it, but my brother needed shoes desperately. She went and was turned down because she was told that "wops" don't need shoes.

Q: In those words?

A: Yeah, virtually in those words. Maybe "guinea" - they're all the same to me. And my dad had been discriminated against at the General Electric Co. because he was Italian. He had a German-Irish boss, I think it was, that kept him from advancing in his position. Even during World War II, when welders were making big money. My father was finally sent to welding school, but paid less than anybody there, and so they understood what discrimination was...

... I have generally found, when I became conscious of the fact that there were people who didn't like me just because I was Italian, that if somebody says something to you that's derogatory, or even when they laughingly say, "you wops are all alike" or "you guineas are all alike", they know that the word is an insulting term. Even if they say it with a smile on their face. It's just their way of letting you know. And maybe in their own way, of letting their subconscious out. They have these subtle prejudices, and you have to deal with them, you know.

female, 65, Jewish

... In New York, I didn't know there were any other people than Jews, and then we got an Italian neighbor whose children went to parochial school, and we talked of them - they were different. The whole world was us. The East Side was so heavily Jewish. And now I know, we are they. When I graduated high school and started looking for a job, I was told you don't even apply to the New York Telephone Co. You don't apply here and you don't apply there. You don't expect to go to a college other than CCNY or Hunter College, and only a few Jews were accepted at Columbia, and that's when I began to feel that maybe they had more people than we have. Then I started reading statistics, and I learned we're a drop in the bucket.

male, 32, Irish ancestry

Q: Have you personally ever been the victim of discrimination because you have an Irish background?

A: I once applied for a job near New York City. It was a very WASPish community, and I was brought there by a good friend. He had sort of cracked the shell. He was moving to a new school, and was trying to see if I could get a job at his old school. I could just sense that, when I was brought in there, he was their token Jew that they'd had on the faculty, and they weren't going to have any more token ethnic minorities - you couldn't prove that. Having gone through the interview, I just got a sense of that, and my friend said the he kind of got that idea, too.

Q: Do you think that discrimination against the Irish exists today?

A: Yes, I imagine there are certain places where it still exists today. I don't know if it's as pronounced as it is for other ethnic groups, but perhaps, in the sense of being Catholic, there are certain organizations that you cannot belong to and certain clubs that you cannot belong to. Even though a person like John F. Kennedy had been elected President, there's still a feeling in the country, oh, you're Irish, your heritage is that of a farmer, potato picker, worker who worked in a mill, or something like that, and you're still not accepted.

III. BEING DIFFERENT

C. STEREOTYPES

What are stereotypes?

Do stereotypes adequately describe real people?

female, 20, Irish-German ancestry

Q: Do you hear stereotypes discussed among your friends?

A: You hear different stereotypes. Because Polish, they're supposed to be stupid. The Italians are supposed to be chauvinistic. The French guys, you know, are really into watching the women walk by, and the Irish are supposed by be whisky drinking. And I have a Jewish friend and everybody kids him for being pennypinching and stuff like that. You hear a lot of comments but it's different for each ethnic group.

Q: Is it all in fun?

A: Yeah, oh yeah. Nobody really gets down on anybody else.

female, 27, Irish ancestry

Q: Have you ever come across stereotypes of Irish people?

A: Yeah. The largest stereotype I guess is that of the habitual drunkard. Which has some truth. Dad is in AA, and he said as much as you don't want to believe the stereotypes, you look around the room, and most of the faces you see are Irish. I don't know whether heredity has anything to do with it. I think it might almost be a psychological thing - well, they think we're all drunks anyway, so we might as well live up to their expectations. I don't know whether that's indeed the case or not. I don't find myself really going in a great deal for drinking. And there's another stereotype - the happy Irishman, perpetually in a state of drunken stupor. They're really not a happy people, I don't think. I don't think even in the Republic they're happy-go-lucky all the time.

female, 19, born in Iran

Q: Have you ever heard stereotypes of Persian people?

A: Sometimes they say, "Where are you from?" They don't know where Iran is. They think we're Arabs, which is totally different, Persians and Arabs. "Are you riding camels? Do you have TV in your country?" And it is so ridiculous to me. I laugh at them. I say, you know, we're riding camels, we eat the grasses, and we live on the trees...

white female, 31

Q: Has it changed you much since you've been married to a black man?

A: I realize a lot more about blacks, and how they see us. As a child, I would never have believed a black person was totally intimidated around white people. But since I've been with my husband and his family and friends, I found out they were very intimidated by white people. As a child, I always thought the opposite. Because they were aggressive and seemed to have a lot of confidence in themselves. As I find it, it's really the opposite. Blacks are not aggressive. They're not the things that they pretend to be for whites. They act out the stereotype a lot for people, especially when they expect it. They'll act out that they're so strong and so tough, and they're so mean. And they're not. They're soft-hearted. They're nothing like the stereotype at all...

...If you could hear my husband when I first met him - the things he used to believe about whites - whites were incestuous, they were not to be trusted. He really believed it.

male, 29, Polish ancestry

Q: Have you heard any stereotypes about Polish people in the United States?

A: All that I know that is in the past, Polish people were hard-working people. I've seen it. I imagine there are a bunch of goof-offs and criminals there, but I just know that my grandfathers, for example, were very hard-working people. I see my uncles are hardworking people. I see my father is hardworking. And they are respectable people, patriotic, they care for their families, and they really try to do what they believe is right. And I see it on both sides of the family, and so in a sense, these are Polish people, and I am Polish and this is how my attitudes are formed... I can also say, that with all the Polish jokes, and the stereotypes, I know those people are wrong, because I can look at the people I know. I can look at myself. And I know just as easily what a Polish person is like. They're obviously wrong.

male, 21, Italian-German ancestry

Q: Do you feel that Italian people in the United States are special?

A: No, not really. The Italian people, when they come over from Italy, they're really hard workers. I have never seen a poor Italian family where I was brought up. They were all pretty well off because they worked hard. I think German and Italian people are entirely different. German people are hard, from what I've seen. The Italian people are very emotional. The Italian people are generous people. German people, from the experiences I've had are entirely different.

female, 21, French-Irish-German ancestry

Q: Have you come across other people's stereotypes?

A: I see that other people have stereotypes of Jewish people. I have a Jewish friend, and sometimes, kiddingly, but other people have meant it seriously, people were saying he was cheap and things like that.

But he wasn't. I've also heard that the Irish drink a lot. You know, they don't. And they're supposed to be storytellers. Maybe it's because they have so many traditions, superstitions that they bring over with them from Ireland. My girlfriend's mother was from Ireland, and she brought over stories about ghosts.

Q: Do you think that the stereotypes are ever true?

A: I think you can make them true. If someone is Irish who likes to drink, I mean, you could say, "well, fine, you see- Irish people like to drink."

female, 43, Italian-Polish ancestry

...Italians are stereotyped as, gee whiz, Mafia. As a kid, we were always taught be proud you're Italian or Polish. It doesn't make any difference. But there's been a lot of jokes about the Italians, or the Polish are supposed to be quite dumb. And I had quite a few digs at school when I was a kid, but I was never afraid to admit it then, nor would I be now...

male, 33, Irish-Italian ancestry

Q: Have you ever heard any stereotypes of various ethnic groups?

A: ...My mother usually bad-knocks the Germans, and I always attributed it to the fact that she was brought up during the War. You were young, and you had a lot of propaganda on the dirty Germans and dirty Japs, so she just never really got over it. Propaganda influenced the way people were thinking about the Germans, and maybe it rubbed off on me, too. Because I would like to think I had a neutral attitude about the Germans, but you can't really root out all of this... The funny thing is, I really like Germany. I never wanted to go to Germany as a GI and I wound up in Germany, and I found it really a tremendous place.

...From my own experience I've found there are three violent people in the world, maybe four. Germans like to fight, the Afghans like to fight, and the Americans like to fight. And the Latin Americans. The Latin Americans don't seem to be into the fighting as much but they seem to be into it in a different way. They're more bloodthirsty, I think. I think Germans and Americans are a little more civilized. They're just in there to give each other a good kick in the rear, you know. The Afghans don't really care if they kill the other guy. I've never witnessed that, but their fights were much bloodier.

female, 19, German ancestry

...German people as a whole are very prideful. They are very hard workers. And my father has passed that down. He is a very hard worker. They have pride in what they do. They save quite a bit. They're very conservation-minded. They have a purpose to everything they do.

Q: Have you found there to be any discrimination or prejudice toward German people in this country?

A: Some people will still, when you say Germany, they'll think Hitler. But anyone who is educated will know that the German people fol-

lowed their leader, and that's what they believe is right. As long as you were not a part of the SS, you're fine. But those are the people who understand Germany, Hitler, all those deaths that were associated with the Jewish people - they kind of get very negative toward Germans.

male, 19, Jewish

Q: Have you ever been stereotyped?

A: Yeah. People would say, "Youre Jewish. You must have a lot of money." I say, "Well, my father may have some money, but he went out and earned it." He got out of college, started off, had no money, sold sandwiches in a dorm and whatever, and he worked his way up. He's not a doctor or anything. Just a salesman. He makes commission, works hard, and they think that just because you're Jewish, your family always has money. And his father didn't have money...

female, 62, Irish ancestry

...I think the majority of Irish people are pretty straight-laced. Unless they have a drink, they're inhibited. I really think they are. I think after they've had a few drinks, they can let themselves go and enjoy, and then I think they suffer terribly if they really drink too much. I'll tell you another thing I think about the Irish; it's probably true about the Jewish people as well, that they're great for education. They want to see their kids get an education. They want to really see their kids do better than they are...

...Speaking of ethnic groups, I think it's true that Italian women would sit by themselves and the men would all party. The men will sit in another room and they drink and have a good time, but the women will all stay by themselves and just sit and talk. They'd give the ladies a little "lady drink" or something like that. But it's changed.

female, 14, Russian-born

Q: Do people ever expect anything of you in particular because you came from Russia?

A: Yeah, they expect me to be a Communist. They expect me to have all those Communist ideas. They expect that I would say to them that Communism is really good, and I just don't want to do that because I don't think it's that good. I think a lot of Americans, especially teenagers, have no idea what Russia is. I mean, they just think that in Russia every second person is a KGB agent. If you say anything, you go to a concentration camp. That's all they know about. These movies, James Bond movies, they imagine that it's all like that. Even though it's not true.

female, 33, Italian ancestry

Q: Do you find that the Italian people living in this country have any characteristics in common?

A: Yeah, I do. I think the one thing that they really have in common is that they are survivors. And that they will do what they have

to do to feed their families, to clothe them. They're very hard workers. My dad worked two jobs for 25 years to give his children what he thought they should have. I'd say 90% of the Italians that I grew up with were all that way. They did whatever they could. They're strivers. They're achievers. And not necessarily achievement by what the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant goals were but achievers in the sense that they'd get a home, they'd buy it, they'd pay for it, they'd have their car, they'd have plenty of food in the house. Nobody would ever go hungry. Their kids go to Church. They set a very high moral tone, that kind of thing.

male, 20, Greek ancestry

... I'm surprised when people hear I'm Greek they say, "Is that what you look like?" "What do you eat?" "Does your religion believe in God?" They say, "Does you father own a restaurant?" That stereotype in particular they associate with Greek. Because when the Greeks first immigrated, that's the only place that they could get work. And they stayed in it. And they flourished.

female, 28, Jewish

Q: Did you ever come across stereotypes when you were in school?

A: Yeah, like they'd say all Jews wear glasses, and have big noses, and curly hair, and you know, the physical stereotype. And you know, isn't it strange that you have to use special dishes, and you don't believe in a divinity. They would bring up things like that.

male, 42, Polish ancestry

Q: Have you ever come across stereotypes of Polish people?

A: Yeah, I guess so. The old bit about being the dumb Polack. Several times people have told me that the most dangerous thing in the world is a Polack with brains. They think that most Polish people are dumb.

Q: Have you ever had an experience where someone has learned from you that that wasn't the case?

A: Every time they talk to me.

male, 69, Russian ancestry

...You know, a person from Russia, or the Ukraine, that person is good, he's the best, really, because they're so emotional. They're not false. They're true to themselves, and they're genuine in their feelings. They don't try to cover up in any way, or give false impressions. When they're good, they are really good, and when they're bad, they're the worst you can find on earth. They're two extremes. There seems to be no middle ground. And I think that the one thing that the Russians hold is the religion. They are deeply very religious. They really are. They're extremely so.

Are people really different from one another?

male, 82, Jewish

...There is a classic poem written in Yiddish. In a free translation into English, it says all the people are brothers. Take black and white and yellow and mix all those colors together. All the people are brothers. From one father and one mother. Do you understand what it means? It means black, yellow, white, any color - brown - that is what nationalities or color people are in the world of ours, ethnic groups - mix them all together and everybody comes from one father and one mother.

male, 32, Irish ancestry

...If you come from a heritage of people that have been oppressed, you tend to be a little more tolerant and open. You at least become aware that other people exist, and they think differently, and they act differently. You don't have to be like them, but you try to understand where they're coming from. If people could only remember that they, too, were oppressed, and - instead of opposing ethnic groups, they should have more sympathy towards their plight because they experienced the same thing. They experienced it perhaps longer or just as long as some others.

black female, 53

Q: How often do you think of yourself as being black?

A: I don't.

Q: At all?

A: At all.

Q: That's very interesting.

A: Let me put it this way. I asked myself, "Who are you?" First, I'm a human being. Then I'm myself. And that's the way I treat everybody else. They're just a human being. You all have the same worries, the same fears.

tables of Information

IV. The People Who Came to America - Tables of Information

Table 1 Periods of Immigration to the United States

Period*	Approximate Dates	National Origins of Many of the Immigrants
1. The Colonial Period	1607-1820	England France Scotch-Irish Spain Holland (Netherlands) Germany Africa
2. The Old Immigration	1820-1880	Germany Ireland Scandinavia China
3. The New Immigration	1880-1930	Italy Russia** Austria-Hungary** Poland** Greece
4. The Post-War Immigration	Since 1930	Indochina Germany Canada Mexico Puerto Rico***

* Immigrants to the United States did not come first from one country and then another. People have continually come from all over the world. When we refer to immigration in terms of "periods," it is only to make it easier to understand how our nation was formed.

**Many of the immigrants from these countries were Jews.

***People living in Puerto Rico are citizens of the United States and do not come as immigrants.

Table 2 - Laws and Programs Affecting Immigration to the United States*

1819 The American government began to collect data about immigrants.

1875 For the first time, the government places restrictions on immigration. Prostitutes and alien convicts cannot enter the United States as immigrants. Later, other groups will be added to this list including lunatics and idiots(1882), polygamists and anarchists (1903), and persons with physical or mental disabilities which might make it difficult for them to earn a living (1907).

1882 The Chinese Exclusion Act is passed and people from China cannot enter the Unites States as immigrants.

1891 The government opens Ellis Island in New York Harbor and begins to supervise the processing of immigrants there in 1892.

1907 Under the Gentleman's Agreement with Japan, immigration from Japan to the United States is restricted.

1921 The United States Congress establishes a quota limiting European immigration to a total of only 357,000 people per year.

1924 Congress passes the Johnson-Reed Act revising the quota to allow a total of only about 164,667 people to come to the United States each year from Europe.

1924 Immigration from Asia is restricted under the Oriental Exclusion Act.

1943 The restriction on Chinese immigration is repealed.

1946 The War Brides Act allows foreign wives, husbands, and children of individuals in the United States armed services to enter the United States.

1948 Displaced persons can enter the United States under annual quotas after the passage of the Displaced Persons Act.

1952 Under the McCarren-Walter Immigration and Naturalization Act, every nation is given a quota and race can no longer be used to exclude anyone from immigrating to the United States or becoming a United States citizen.

1965 Under the Immigration Act of 1965, national quotas are abolished. Instead, from outside of the Western Hemisphere, 170,000 people may immigrate annually to the United States, not more than 20,000 from any one country. Immigration from within the Western Hemisphere is limited, for the first time, to 120,000 people.

* Adapted from Ethnic Americans by Leonard Dinnerstein and David M Reimers. New York, Harper and Row, 1975 64

Table 3 Immigrants, By Country of Birth for Selected Countries, 1821-1977

Country	1821-1880	1881-1930	1931-1970	1971-1977
All countries	10,189,429	27,572,583	7,410,549	2,900,800
Europe	8,981,563	23,131,957	3,699,476	595,200
Austria[1]	80,769	4,051,582	71,823	3,400
Hungary			93,130	9,100
France	315,887	266,120	123,732	12,300
Germany	3,051,158	2,855,767	866,136	46,400
Great Britain:				79,900
England	960,866	1,656,787	464,631	-
Scotland	173,955	552,664	85,721	-
Wales	18,879	66,780	8,585	-
Unspecified	793,146	-	-	-
Greece	398	421,091	156,656	76,800
Ireland	2,825,592	1,749,735	146,934	11,000
Italy	81,247	4,569,918	520,389	111,100
Netherlands	47,173	199,387	97,010	7,200
Norway[2]	356,669	597,032	55,940	3,500
Sweden		1,059,899	50,225	4,200
Poland	16,651	381,073	225,897	29,200
Spain	28,072	138,654	47,356	23,800
U.S.S.R.	43,156	3,298,821	64,104	24,800
Asia	230,683	827,642	650,841	958,700
China	228,944	148,300	151,037	129,400
Japan	355	275,308	86,703	33,400
Viet Nam	-	-	6,600	25,000
America	1,156,872	3,488,214	3,228,159	1,269,400
Canada	654,451	2,242,541	841,845	70,500
Mexico	25,118	730,817	845,508	436,100
South America	8,715	104,773	330,134	167,600
Cuba	-	-	335,100	216,400
Africa[3]	1,005	23,304	65,017	53,000

Source of Data: U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, Annual Report Tables

Footnotes, Table 3

1. Beginning in 1861, data is collected for Austria-Hungary. Since 1905, Hungary and Austria are recorded separately.

2. Data for Norway and Sweden are combined from 1820-1868.

3. Does not include Africans who came as slaves.